8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Thus, cures of cattle and human beings, as well, bring in the fairy-lore. The good people may take anything from hens to men and women. When they mysteriously sap the strength of a man or woman, leaving him or her sick or weak and listless, he or she is little recognizable as the strong helper and friend of former years. The vitality has gone out of him or her. The country-people can believe that 'they' have spirited away the real person and left in his place "some spent old man that they had with them for a long time". The real person is 'away'. Cures, both religious and responding to the fairy-cult, must bring him back. That does not mean that they do not recognize what we might call natural sickness or disease; they do, only too well, from bitter experience. It means only that they have an explanation for it that infuses it with the associations they have about their belief.

For the belief in changelings, about which you all have heard a great deal, has its root in the fairies' 'taking'. In fact, it is sometimes said, as it was to Lady Gregory, that "all persons who die are taken, except the old people". Only for them is death the natural course of events; all others have fallen prematurely into the power of the supernatural forces.

Thus we can see that the countryman's fairy belief is not entirely a catalogue of wonders, by any means. Nearly all the disturbances of his interests and sentiments can be brought into the scope

8:Arensberg E-5 (1932-1934) 1937
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

of an emotionally charged explanatory scheme. The trouble overtaking them becomes interpretable for him; he knows what has happened and is in some measure ready to take the necessary steps. The fate of his goods and his fellows affects him vitally, it upsets the attachments he feels. But belief is common property; it is given to him and held for him by that community of his fellows of which he is a part. It is a socially held ideology to which he gives credence and in which he is dependent upon his fellows for ways and means, for corroboration, for solace.

But this ideology is much more than a mere interpretative device. Certain anthropologists have tried to see in magic and magic belief a groping, primitive science; but the concept has failed them if pressed very far. For the fairy faith enforces definite behaviour upon the countryman; it lays down rites and practices which he must perform. If he is to recover his goods that have been taken, restore his threatened animals, friends or children, he must follow a definite course. That course is laid down for him again by his community of belief and habit.

If we examine the course he must adopt to combat ill-luck and disaster, we see a new incorporation into belief of the things he values. In cures, nostrums, and other means of combating evil, the goods upon which he and his fellows are dependent and to which they are attached are once more